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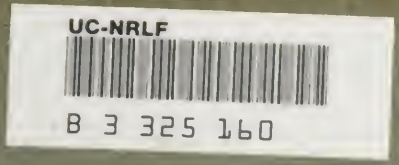

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THE WISDOM OF THE BEASTS

THE WISDOM OF THE BEASTS

BY

CHARLES AUGUSTUS STRONG

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Preface

As I have been accused of an over-use of technical terms in my serious books, and of sacrificing the style to the idea—a grave defect, I admit, in a philosopher—I have endeavoured in these fables to say the same thing in words that he who runs, or travels by train or motor, may read. If, in addition, he should mark and inwardly digest, I trust he will suffer no harm from my stories, and, indeed, think no harm of them. The Wisdom of the Beasts will not seem a pretentious title, if the nature and limitations of their wisdom, as here set forth, be considered. Some of the beasts turn out wiser than others, but so do some men and even some philosophers. They

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are all God's creatures. And I shall be satisfied if the reader, who may fancy the views of some particular beast, or (if a philosopher) perchance find himself here depicted, sees his way, in the end, to include the author too in that category.

Contents

	PAGE
The Top and the Bee	1
The Bird and the Fish	7
Achilles and the Tortoise	15
The Eagle and the Bullet	23
The Truth-Seekers	31
The Bee and the Wasp	39
The Ape and the Dog	47
The Lamb and its Mother	55
The Mole and the Lark	61
The Stoic and the Christian Martyr	69

Calumniari si quis autem voluerit
Quod et arbores loquantur, non tantum ferae:
Fictis jocari nos meminerit fabulis.

The Top and the Bee

The Top and the Bee

THERE was once a top, with a round body ending below in a point, but — unlike most tops — a head on its shoulders. And as it spun, an idea came into its head. How do I know it is I that am spinning, and not rather the world that is whirling about me? And, as it was still spinning very fast, it hummed this idea aloud.

At the amazing suggestion, the choir of heaven and furniture of earth stood perfectly still, but only for an instant; for they had other things to do, and could not afford the time for reasoning. But a bee, who had been attracted by the humming (and, indeed, had at first thought the top a member of its own species), but who was revolted when it caught the sense underneath the sound,

buzzed back the reply: Surely, much spinning has turned your head; do you, a mere top—who, if larger than myself, are still smaller than an apple, and *a fortiori* smaller than the earth or than the planet Jupiter—presume to think that all these heavenly bodies are circling about *you*, and that you are the centre of the universe? Think of Ptolemy, and of the difficulties of his system, which upon this view would be much increased; think of the discredit into which the very word anthropocentric has fallen.

At this the top, which was a modest toy, experienced a momentary feeling of shame, and had to admit to itself that there *was* something a little impudent in its suggestion; but, being also hard-headed, and desirous of doing justice at once to itself and to the rest of the world, it replied to the bee: I see your point; but it seems to me, none the less, that there is *something* in my suggestion; and perhaps we might make a compromise, and say that each of us—you speak, of

course, for the rest of the universe—is moving with respect to the other? That is, from my point of view you are moving, and from your point of view I am moving, and, in short, our motion is reciprocal. Reciprocity—that is all I contend for. And as he hummed these words (his humming was now distinctly less vociferous than before), the top thought he had said the last word about the matter.

In order the better to hear him, the bee had drawn very close, and being caught in a little eddy of air above him, it now alighted on his shoulder. For a moment its head was turned, and it said to the top: I see that everything depends on the point of view; there is certainly much to be said for your proposal—moreover, it accords with the democratic spirit of the times. One point of view is as good as another.

But at this moment, recalling that it had business, it flew up; and immediately its head ceased to turn, and all the objects about it ceased to whirl; and it saw that

what had been moving was simply the top. And as it settled upon a flower, it called back to the top : One point of view is as good as another—if not better !

But the top had now begun to wobble ; the world appeared to it to be behaving very strangely, and the strictly reciprocal character of their relations was not as clear to it as before. It had wholly ceased to hum, the relationist or any other doctrine. In a moment more it was lying motionless on the ground, reflecting sadly that, if all motion can be looked at from two points of view, it is the point of view of the universe that prevails in the long run.

The Bird and the Fish

The Bird and the Fish

THERE was a young bird, just taught to fly but very observing, who lived (or had recently lived) in a nest on a steeple, close to a broad-faced clock. The daily programme included a flight across a broad meadow to a stream, where meat and drink were to be had in close proximity, and a return for the afternoon nap and for the night's repose. The mother was a punctilious old bird, who lived by rule, and made a great point of punctuality; and her offspring, partly from filial affection, partly in dread of her reproof, had soon acquired those regular habits which are so desirable in little birds. It flew straight from the steeple to the stream and from the stream to the steeple, taking careful note of the objects on the way, and timing its journeys exactly by the

hands of the great clock, which were visible from the stream.

Now, ever since this young bird was hatched, there had been a dead calm, with not a breath of air stirring. But on the morning in question, it noticed that something was changed in nature, it could hardly tell what : sounds from the direction of the stream were veiled and scarcely audible, while those from a barnyard in the opposite direction were abnormally distinct. But when it flew to the stream, a stranger phenomenon still presented itself. For it found that, as judged by the hands of the clock, it arrived *ahead of time*. And how this could possibly be, was a problem that at once engaged its attention ; for it was not merely observant, but had an inquiring mind.

Seeing a little fish of about its own age, with which it had made friends, it laid the question before him. Why, said the fish, don't you understand ? there must be a current in the air, like what there is in the water. It always takes me longer to

swim up stream than to swim down. What is a current? asked the bird; I never saw one. And how silly to speak of swimming, which is an entirely different thing from flying—much less of a feat, in fact. In swimming, as I can clearly see, you have the help of the water to buoy you up; but to fly is to sustain oneself in nothing at all!

Nothing at all! answered the fish: do you call air nothing at all? I like to come to the surface every little while to breathe it; otherwise I should not have had the pleasure of making your acquaintance. What it is you breathe, returned the bird, I do not know—I have always supposed it to be water. As for air, I have never observed it, and it is against my principles to admit what cannot be observed.

Here the colloquy was interrupted by the fish catching sight of a worm, which diverted its thoughts from philosophy. But the little bird, left to its meditations (for it was now too engrossed by the

question to think of feeding), evolved ere long a theory which seemed to it alone adequate to meet the facts. For he was a gifted bird, and already expert at scientific reasoning. If I fly, with only the usual effort, in less than the usual time, it can only be because the distance between the steeple and the stream has contracted over night. Objects are not constant in their magnitude, but are capable of contraction under certain conditions. And, elated by this conclusion, he reflected what a wonderful thing scientific instruments are, which enable us to discover astonishing things about nature that we should not otherwise have known.

Perceiving by the steeple clock that it was now almost noon, he flew back to it as straight as he could fly. And here another surprising thing occurred. For —measured by the clock—he now arrived as much *behind time* as he had before arrived ahead of it. And this set him again a-thinking. Can it be, he said to himself, that the field, which I thought

contracted this morning, had expanded again by afternoon, and become as much too large as it was before too small? Surely a doubtful hypothesis. And for a time he was in great perplexity.

Ah! I have it, he cried out at last; what has changed is not the field, but the clock. By flying away from a clock you alter its time-keeping so that it loses, and by flying towards it you alter its time-keeping so that it gains. The time-keeping of clocks is not a fixed and unalterable thing, but depends on whether you move or stand still. What is more, their variation can be calculated from the distance and the speed at which you go. What a wonderful thing is mathematics, which enables you to calculate—and to prove, with all the certainty of figures—how natural objects will behave!

At this moment the young philosopher caught sight of his mother, and rushed to tell her of his remarkable experiences, and his discoveries concerning the contraction of fields or the more probable

irregularities of clocks. But the hen-bird only replied: Foolish child! there has been a slight wind blowing since day-break. What is wind? asked the young bird. A motion of the atmosphere, said its mother. And what is the atmosphere? the little questioner persisted. But the mother-bird only answered: You will know when you are older.

This is the same story I heard from the fish, thought the little bird. I have long suspected my mother of superstition, and now I am sure of it.

But the sky had become very dark, rumblings were heard in the distance, and pretty soon a mighty rushing noise seemed to swallow all nature up, ruffling the feathers of the little bird and sending the leaves flying as if they were fit to be its playmates. Undismayed by the havoc, it sat in the shelter of its mother's wing, and whispered: The heavens are falling—and yet there are people who can believe in the fixity of time and space!

Achilles and the Tortoise

Achilles and the Tortoise

DEAR old Zeno! said the tortoise. He was not only a genius, the keenest of antique dialecticians, and a faithful friend withal, but he had a tender feeling for the lower animals. How jolly those puzzles were—the arrow that couldn't move from the spot (or, rather, could only get into endless spots without moving), the runners in the stadium who ran twice as fast as they did run, and Achilles with his *ever not quite*. Zeno may or may not have been himself taken in. But what I reverence him for is that he wouldn't let Achilles catch the tortoise.

You may not appreciate the feelings of one who, among the lower animals, is nearly if not quite the lowest. A horny case protects my carcass, and affords a safe retreat in time of danger, but I have no

similar covering for the spirit. Yet you must have noticed my sensitiveness. The worm can turn when trodden on: I have not even that resource. A certain natural slowness—not to be confused with stupidity—exposes me to the gibes of the superficial. It would have been a cruel jest on Zeno's part to match me with Achilles, if he had not forbidden that mighty man to overtake me.

For two thousand years the interdict held good. At least, in the opinion of the learned world, no completely satisfactory solution of Zeno's difficulties had ever been found; and if they were insuperable to philosophers, of course they were insuperable to Achilles. I was temporarily safe. But towards the end of the last century a German mathematician, who never had heard of Zeno —and did not share, I fear, his kindly interest in the tortoise—appears to have solved the riddle, and broken down the last barrier between me and my redoubtable adversary.

How I long, under these circumstances, for a modern Zeno, you can perhaps imagine. I looked into the pages of a French philosopher of repute, but he said there had never been any real difficulty, and that Achilles had only to walk straight forward (I wonder why he didn't do it, then?) in order to reach me. His English critic—the brilliant mathematicologician you wot of—says the difficulties were real, but that the German has solved them. This may be; but what grieves me is that he (the critic) had such a splendid chance to rehabilitate me—nay, to turn the tables finally on Achilles in my favour—and missed it. I must tell you the story, for it is interesting.

Tristram Shandy, he says, took a year to write the history of the first two days of his life: but if he had persevered—and had had eternity to do it in—*no part of his life would have remained unwritten.* (This explains, thought I as I read, how the very wicked can expiate their sins in hell, if they have eternity to do it in.)

He says we may call this paradox the Tristram Shandy.

But why didn't he put Achilles in the place of Tristram Shandy's life, and me in the place of Tristram Shandy, and call it the Inverse Achilles? You may not have heard that I once out-distanced a hare; and I should not have hesitated to measure myself with Achilles, if I had mathematics on my side, and the positive assurance that, if I kept on, no part of the ground between myself and him would have remained untraversed.

Between ourselves, I should have thought that 363/365ths of Tristram Shandy's life would have remained unwritten, and that to all eternity. But a tortoise cannot be expected to stand in its own light.

As the tortoise said these words, Achilles appeared in the distance, and strode rapidly up. His plume nodded terribly, and his great stature stood out against the sky; but as he drew nearer, a smile was visible on his countenance,

and a look of fatigue indicative of a long journey. The tortoise had at first withdrawn into its shell, but perceiving the smile, it thrust its head out again, and said to Achilles humbly : I had almost ceased to expect your highness. My compliments to your lowness, returned Achilles affably, on your really remarkable performance : the victory over the hare must now take second place, decidedly. Your highness speaks like a Frenchman, said the tortoise. But how comes it that, after having been expected so long, and so often despaired of, you have nevertheless arrived ?

It is a purely mathematical problem, answered Achilles. You had a start of two thousand years, or the equivalent of that in kilometres ; and if you will divide that by the difference between our speeds, you will find that the sum comes out exactly. I never was strong at mathematics, said the tortoise—indeed, you see yourself that it has nearly been my ruin —and I fear that this defect unfits me

for all deeper inquiries. So successful a runner, replied Achilles with exquisite courtesy, has no need to excuse himself; it is better to be safe and sound practically than safe and sound mathematically. At least, it was in that spirit that I fought at Troy.

The Eagle and the Bullet

The Eagle and the Bullet

An eagle sat on a mountain-crag, and marvelled at the din and the smoke of battle that rose from the valley below. I am thought a cruel bird, it said, though I care for my young, and kill only in order to feed them ; but what lust of carnage and fierce energy of destruction animate these men ! Will the turmoil never cease ? for I fear for my eaglets.

The words were hardly out of its mouth, when a spent bullet, sped upward by some distant musket, described a graceful curve and fell on the rock at its feet. For a moment the bullet, being spent, was too exhausted for utterance ; but, having recovered its breath, it said to the eagle : A thousand pardons ! I meant no harm to you, still less to your little brood ; an irresistible force impelled me, and I had

to take the line and go to the point which it determined.

I accept your apology, replied the eagle majestically, at least as concerns your having been driven ; but this business of the line and the point needs looking into. A wide experience of flights, and something piercing in my vision, have at last led me to the conclusion (though the matter was long in doubt in my mind) that no such things as lines and points exist. They are creatures of the imagination, necessary, indeed, to the description of flying, but not to be taken as existent *in rerum natura*.

I don't know, returned the bullet, whether you consider me as existing *in rerum natura*, for you are a lively bird, and may not have room for the inanimate in your scheme of things ; but—speaking with a due sense of the enormous gap between us—I must honestly say that my very limited experiences, or rather dumb feelings, suggest an opposite conclusion. It seems to me that I move in lines and stop at points.

I used to be of that opinion myself, rejoined the eagle grandly; indeed, in association with a brother eagle of great intellectual power, I worked out a philosophy which resolved time into instants and space into points. Those were all that we needed for our geometrical reckonings—you know, in our flying we prefer to follow the hypotenuse—but I afterwards became convinced that we had thereby knocked the bottom out of things. For no extension was left us in which to fly, and no time in which to do it.

A hard case for an eagle, remarked the bullet, not to have time and space to fly in. But I thought infinity (I know a little about it, being myself pure mind-dust) solved the problem: that you could get from point to point in instants if you had enough of them.

Alas, no! answered the eagle: instants will not do—you have got to have durations. What sort of things are those? said the bullet; for I have never experienced, I mean felt, them. From the

time I leave the gun to the time I hit the mark, it is never anything but one ever-present instant. Goodness! cried the eagle: then you inhabit eternity. Or the extreme opposite, the bullet replied.

But, now that I have heard your reasons, the bullet continued, let me explain to you how the matter looks to me. The point of view of a bullet is not contemptible, in these transcendent affairs. And, first, let me tell you what happens when I go straight up, as I am sometimes obliged to do. When I reach the upper limit of my course, I stop and turn back. Now perhaps you think I stop for what you call a duration. Far from it! the laws of nature, to which you and I are alike subject, permit no loitering, and it is not at the top of my flight that I can rest but only at the bottom.

What is more, these same laws require me to descend in a straight line. Hold! said the eagle: with the infinity of your dusty nature, you must descend in a great many lines. And, it added, if what I

hear about the agitation of your interior is true, they must be very complicated ones. They are not the less lines, said the bullet; and their joint effect is straightness. Which of your particles, asked the eagle quizzically, did you say stopped ascending when it reached a point? All of them, replied the bullet.

But all this is pure mythology, said the eagle—I mean, natural science. It is not what a living creature sees or feels. When you look at the sharp division between light and darkness, asked the bullet—as, for instance, where yonder black cliff cuts the sky—do you not see a line? Only a margin of indetermination, said the eagle. And where that slender pinnacle ends in the blue, do you not see a point? Only a little area of vagueness, the eagle replied. You reconcile me to my blindness, said the bullet; for it seems to me that you have eyes, but see not.

We seem to be looking at reality from opposite sides, it went on: to you, despite your perspicacity (or perhaps because of

it ?), it is all extensions and durations ; to me, it is all points and instants. Can it be that the difference between us depends on the fact that you are an animal and I a mere lump of lead ?

Very likely, replied the eagle proudly, for with my vision I can see a vast sweep of country, and with my memory (you know I am very long-lived) I can appreciate durations. You, poor dusty thing, must be satisfied with feeling points and instants—if so be you do feel them, which I very much doubt.

With these words, the eagle flew aloft to gaze at the sun. But the bullet stood its ground, and only thought : How strange that the truth should be hidden from this noble and far-sighted bird, and revealed to a bullet !

The Truth-Seekers

The Truth-Seekers

WHAT is truth? said jesting Pilate—I mean in matters of philosophy and religion. We have looked into the question at Rome, in our higher circles, and I am assured that the young priests in the temples have lost faith in the old deities, that an *haruspex* grins when he meets an *haruspex*, and that the office of *pontifex maximus* is obtained by political influence if not by bribery. And so—to speak for the moment only of religion—I should say that truth might be defined as *the relation of an idea to your interests*.

You must consider the very varied nature of interests, said his interlocutor, an old Jew of much business experience. In my country we take a most serious view of religion. Our ancestral cult teaches

that prosperity is bound up very closely with behaviour; and I have myself found that strict observance of engagements and minute care in weighing are necessary to business success. Our priests are at the same time our governors ; and anything that tended to undermine their authority would be subversive of the State. So that, frankly, if the Hebrew religion were not in existence, it would be necessary to invent it.

We too, said a young Greek of Alexandria, a rhetorician and clever manipulator of words, have examined the nature of truth in our schools, and it may interest you to hear the conclusions to which we have come. We think that truth is simply *what you believe.* Thus the Egyptian peasant believes that the sun is a fiery monster, and that is therefore truth for him. Most people believe that the earth is flat, and surrounded on all sides by an ocean, and that is accordingly truth for them. You and I, who know that the earth is round, and that the sun is simply a

ball of luminous matter revolving about it (for we may exclude the notion of Aristarchus, that it is the earth that revolves about the sun), cannot *prove* these highly probable opinions, and therefore truth is, in our case too, what we believe.

But what, in that case, interposed Pilate, is the sense of asking whether a belief is true? I know the question will sound ingenuous, but I am not used to these hair-splitting discussions.

With the cares of empire on your shoulders, answered the Greek, you naturally have other things to think of. But your query, he went on with the greatest fluency, admits of a perfectly simple answer. Truth, so far as yet attained, means what we believe now, but perfect truth means what we will believe in future. You can see for yourself that this must be so, since any other kind of truth would not be attainable. What if we should be permanently deceived? objected Pilate. We should not *know* that we were deceived, returned the Greek; and not to

know that you are deceived is—for us—to possess the truth.

This is not the kind of truth I ask for, observed Pilate, in the trials (like the one just ended) I am occasionally obliged to hold. When I bid a witness speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, I mean by the word *conformity to fact.*

Your honour is a great proconsul, but doubtless not versed in these matters, said the rhetorician ; for no witness can testify to anything but what he *believes* to be conformable to fact. You cannot resurrect the past itself.

Thank heaven not, replied Pilate. I have had enough of governing and trials, and particularly of this last.

Let me put a case to you, Greekling, said the wily Jew. Suppose we should differ as to the number of windows in the next room, whether it be three or four. Now truth, as you yourself allow, implies conformity to fact. I say there are three windows ; you say there are four. Couldn't

we go into the next room and verify—I believe you attach great weight to verification—our respective assertions, and if there proved to be three windows, wouldn't truth have belonged to mine in a different sense from that of its having been believed ?

But note what you imply by your problem, returned the slippery Greek. You imply a complete absence of doubt as to the meaning of our question. Suppose, in addition to the three windows, there were an opening over a door, like what I have observed in some Western houses.

Yes, or a loophole of any description, broke out Pilate. Oh, you Greeks !

After the laugh had subsided, he went on, with true Roman seriousness : I am not a scoffer, though my opening remarks may have suggested it. And if I were, I should have difficulty in remaining one, after the events of this morning. I honestly tried to do justice, in a particularly difficult case ; and if I finally allowed your Jewish authorities to have their way, it was for the technical reason that a Roman

governor must govern conquered peoples according to their own law, and not according to the better law of the Romans. And the magistrates assured me that, according to their law, the prisoner was worthy of death.

Your honour need have no doubts on that score, said the old Jew; he was a pestilent fellow, who interfered with our legitimate business in the temple (you know I sometimes let money out), and on one occasion struck me with a whip of cords.

There was something in his eyes, replied Pilate, that marked him out from other culprits I have known; he was not a bad man, surely, and I wish I could have declared him innocent.

He was a visionary, said the Greek, and believed he was coming again on the clouds.

He *is* coming, said a young boy who had served at table, and now spoke for the first time, careless of the astonished look on the face of Pilate. It is true!

But the Greek replied, with a superior smile: You have a special interest in believing it true.

The Bee and the Wasp

The Bee and the Wasp

TIME is honey, said the little busy bee. And from that I draw the consequences, *primo*, that there was no time before there was honey, and that, therefore, the world came into existence with the race of bees ; *secundo*, that the future must be unadulteratedly sweet, since otherwise that portion of time would not be honey. Indeed, the present is sweet—who has not felt its sweetness ? I shall call this the saccharine philosophy ; since it is easier to conceive an idea distinctly if you have a name.

Nonsense, cried a wasp : you are a creature with a sting ! Was existence sweet to the man who tried the other day to rob your hive ? Did he not rub his cheeks and roar with pain as you plied him with your delicate instrument ? Moreover, this honey of yours—which you esteem sweet, but

many good judges consider mawkish—is really made up of a multitude of ingredients, some of which are deadly poisons. The hemlock that caused the death of Socrates is among the flowers on which you feed. Yet you gloss over these sinister facts, and pretend that all is sweetness! A really candid insect would recognise that some things are sweet and others bitter.

I am not the only insect with a sting, replied the bee. But since I have one, I admit that my doctrine needs rectification; indeed, I have always been dimly aware that there was another side to things. Now—on reflection—I cannot give up my view that time is honey: for my whole experience confirms it. May it not be that the other principle, the root of bitterness, is what we call space? Time and space would thus co-operate to form the whole of things, crossing each other, as it were, at right angles; but time would be good, space bad—time synthetic, space analytic—time real, space imaginary.

We should thus have a sort of Manichaean philosophy, with contradiction lodged at the heart of things.

Why you should wish to put contradiction in so central a place I cannot understand, said the wasp, unless because you find it in your philosophy ; but that has usually been considered a reason for changing one's philosophy. *I* might build a philosophy upon contradiction ; but then, I am a part of the principle which denies. Let us review your system critically. The starting-point of your thought is, I think, honey. I mean, though you say *time* is honey, yet, if you were obliged to choose between the two, it is honey, not time, you would prefer.

Pardon me, said the bee ; if the Deity were to offer me honey in one hand, and the pursuit of honey in the other, I should choose the latter. Always providing, it added after a moment, I could attain enough of it for my daily sustenance.

So that honey, retorted the wasp, is what you are after, but you are satisfied

with an amount of it that precludes indigestion. Now, if it takes time to gather honey, it takes space to store it : what are those hexagonal cells, which you construct so cleverly, but deployments in space ? And the more the honey fills them, the more you exult and buzz ; so that even you recognise that space enters into its essence. The undervaluing of space seems to me a relic of the ancient prejudice against matter, and quite out of place in a saccharine philosophy ; for honey, after all, is matter.

Impious suggestion ! cried the bee ; I will no longer discuss things with you. For honey—so far from being matter—is the goal of endeavour, the *summum bonum*, the reward of patient industry ; it has an ethical quality which evaporates when you spread it out mentally in space. In its deepest essence, honey is life. I cannot live without honey : whence it follows, by inexorable logic, that honey and life are the same thing. And that is why I attribute so much importance to time in my

philosophy. It is not simply that time is honey (which has a certain utilitarian sound), but that honey is life ; so that to make the most of time is to make the most of life, which is to make the most of honey. But even you, I think, said the bee to the wasp, are not without a similar means of subsistence ?

Saying which, he flew off into space, in search of saccharine matter. But the wasp, as he watched him go, muttered : What narrowness ! If I had to choose between sipping honey and the use of my sting, I verily believe I should choose the latter.

The Ape and the Dog

The Ape and the Dog

An ape had been reading the works of the late Mr. Darwin; and was at once pleased, and pained, by what he found there. Pleased, to learn of his high connections, and to know himself the ancestor of so distinguished a being as man; but pained, and that beyond expression, at the thought of the millions of years that must elapse before he could hope to overtake his descendants. In fact, he had fallen into a state of profound melancholy; from which he was rescued by the sight of some glistening objects belonging to his master, a famous physiologist.

The first of these objects was a long mirror or cheval-glass, in which the ape saw his portrait depicted to the very life. Gazing in it, not without complacency, he was flattered by its testimony, and pre-

disposed to believe that testimony true. I have only to keep up appearances, he said to himself, or proceed a little further along the same line, and I shall become a man.

When his curiosity was satisfied, he turned to the second object, a pair of spectacles which the physiologist had left lying on a table, and—in imitation of a sight he had seen many hundreds of times —clapped them forthwith upon his nose. The heightened distinctness with which he now saw everything, and a certain change for the better in the dimensions of things, at once aroused his attention ; but when he took them off, and examined them curiously from every point of view, he chanced to look through the edge of the lens, and saw, to his surprise, that everything he looked at was doubled. He turned to his portrait in the glass, and saw two monkeys instead of one. A less intelligent animal would have been deceived ; but, being no ordinary ape, and on the highroad to become a man,

he only observed : It appears that appearances are deceptive.

A poor dog, who lived tied up in the laboratory, chanced to overhear this remark, and, pricking up his ears, he addressed the ape with the words : In the dog's life, which I lead, I have occasionally met with deception, but what precisely do you mean by appearances ? I, who live on solid ground, and need substantial food and drink for my nourishment, am unfamiliar with the leafy, shadowy concepts of you who dwell in trees (for I think, when at home, you are arboreal in your habits ?), and should be obliged to you for an explanation.

My good fellow, said the kindly ape, with the greatest willingness. But have you never yourself been taken in, not by man, but by nature ?

You recall to me, returned the dog, one of the bitterest experiences of my life. *Infandum* . . . As I was once crossing a stream—but you know the story, so why should I repeat it to you ? If

you wished to do me a great favour, you would explain the occurrence to me, for I have never properly understood it—the whole thing was so sudden.

Why, said the ape, you took the shadow for the substance, the appearance for the thing itself. And in this you were only following, with your dog-like docility, in the footsteps of man, who has also not learned on all occasions to distinguish them.

I merely used my eyes, rejoined the dog. What are eyes for, if not to show you a thing as it is? Would you have them show it to you as it isn't? I wouldn't forbid them to show it to you as it isn't, answered the ape, if nature made them, and by processes such as are described in the book, the good book, I have lately been reading. I fear, my honest dog, your conceptions are just a little behind the times, and that you have never heard of evolution.

I find it so hard, said the dog, not to believe my eyes. Your eyes are good enough, answered the ape, for such things

as eyes were meant for, but you have a better sense still, if I am not misinformed —I refer to your *flair*.

Heavens! cried the dog: why didn't I think, when I saw the image in the brook, to use my *flair*?

Good, said the ape: image was the *mot juste*, and you are in a fair way, if you keep on in this line, to overcome your disabilities of thought.

But what are we lingering here for? it went on, looking about the room. I wish I knew, answered the dog, and I have my fears, for I have sometimes known men to be cruel. (Not so cruel as nature, it is true, and I still prefer to live with them.) Some are cruel for nothing or for the pleasure of it, and some for good ends, and because they have to be: for instance, when I have done wrong, and know it, and my master castigates me. Under these circumstances I keep my tail between my legs, and consider that I am showing a proper spirit.

I wish I could show a proper spirit, said the ape, but the thought of cruelty makes me tremble. Steady, steady ! cried the dog ; let us hope that whatever is done will be for the good of sentient creatures. Then, seeing that the ape had recovered his equanimity, and, indeed, was preparing to put a good face on the matter, he exclaimed cheerily : Ah, now you are behaving like a MAN !

The Lamb and its Mother

The Lamb and its Mother

THERE was a sheep that had brought forth a lamb, more brilliant and discriminating than herself; at least, the lamb showed a gift for abstract inquiries, though it did not drive very well at practice. This, naturally, gave great concern to the old sheep, and she tried by various artifices to direct her child's footsteps in what she conceived to be the right channel.

But she was always thwarted by the lamb's sceptical disposition—for it would never regard anything as quite sure—and by a principle, which the lamb early imbibed, that, after all, it was all One.

For example, the little creature showed a tendency in its feeding to confuse the harmful with the nutritious, and to eat weeds and poisonous herbs with the same

relish as the tender grass. You have picked this up, said the sheep, from the young goat with whom I saw you associating ; if you go on so, you will give yourself an indigestion, if not shorten your life.

How shall I know the grass when I see it ? asked the lamb. By its colour, green, answered its mother. But *is* it really green ? the sceptical lamb demanded. It is green enough for all practical purposes, replied the sheep.

The lamb reflected for a time about this, with the result of concluding that, however that might be, the grass was not green enough for theoretical purposes ; and that, anyway, it was all One.

Pursuing its meditations as to what the grass was, if it was not green, the lamb came to the conclusion that its nature might be expressed with sufficient accuracy by saying that it was different from red ; and, generalising this, it decided that everything was different from yet related to everything else, but that, nevertheless, it was all One.

The old sheep, wellnigh out of patience with a philosophy that transcended her own humdrum ideas, could only repeat, with wearisome insistence: *Don't* eat weeds—don't confuse the noxious with the edible—don't think that differences make no difference. But the lamb replied, with precocious sapience: These are negations, and my philosophy is designed to avoid needless negations; however, since negation is at bottom the same thing as affirmation, it makes no difference whether you assert or deny; and, whichever you do, it is all One.

At this the old sheep was at last exasperated beyond all measure, and broke out angrily: This philosophy of unity is the most tiresome and monotonous thing I ever heard of; why, it is against common sense. But, even as she said the words, she realised how far her qualifications for philosophy came short of her daughter's, and she brought them out with a certain sheepishness.

Common sense! exclaimed the lamb,

standing up on its hind legs : you are the naïvest old lady that ever had a lamb for her offspring. Do you not know that all these things have been definitively threshed out by the Germans, and that it has been proved beyond question that things in themselves are unknowable and do not exist, and that the universe is One?

One what? asked the sheep.

I am not quite sure, answered her daughter ; but if I have correctly understood my illustrious teachers, it is one Lamb.

The Mole and the Lark

The Mole and the Lark

This is a very dark world, said a mole. I cannot think so, answered a lark who had seen him burrowing ; a moment ago I was singing songs at heaven's gate, and I assure you they expressed my true feeling about existence.

Heavens ! said the mole ; I was not talking about the ratio between the delights and the sorrows of living, which some people find so depressing. I enjoy my subterranean life as much as you do your celestial one, and I have no wish to exchange my appetising labours for the repose of the grave. What I meant was that the world is dark in a metaphysical sense. I was forcibly reminded of it the other day when my hole caved in, and a storm of atoms, very like that described by Lucretius, threatened to bury me.

And how did you escape? asked the bird, much interested, and indeed all of a flutter. By opposing to the storm of atoms a contrary storm, said the mole, with all the force of my fore and hinder paws. That sounds like free will, said the bird. There was will enough, I can tell you, answered the mole, and fortunately all four of my paws were free. Otherwise I might not have been here to tell you the story.

But, as I was saying, I learned a lesson from the adventure, and that lesson was (if I may use a hackneyed expression) the power of circumstance. Circumstance here of course means earth—in short, the atoms. The earthiness of existence, the atomic nature of the forces with which we have to do—that was the lesson.

Your experience was a trying one, returned the lark, but I think one must have lived underground to adopt your explanation of it. Ugh! to think of being buried under a storm of atoms, or, for that matter, living in one! It is a

nocturnal view of existence—nay, it gives me the nightmare merely to think of it.

Darling creature, replied the mole, I love to hear you sing—indeed, I have often wished that I had your voice—but, really, you shouldn't venture to discuss philosophy. The depths of existence are not to be sounded by touching upper C. In very truth, you *do* live in a storm of atoms—or, not to be behind the latest advance of science, of electrons—and the air you breathe and the atmosphere in which you float are composed of nothing else. Now, atoms and electrons are dark things—they are out of sight, and not even the physicists understand about them. That is what I meant by the world being dark ; and, in saying it, I have the whole of natural science to back me.

So that Mozart, cried the lark, whom I taught to sing, and who in return gave me (or was it his spirit ?) some of my loveliest melodies, lived in the world of darkness you describe, and his finger-

exercises and dear little pen-strokes were but eddies in the storm, mere scurryings of atoms? You make me wish I were dead —a wish I have never felt before.

It is possible, answered the mole, that something in my underground mode of life, or perhaps a defect of my organism (for it is only your voice, your charming voice, I hear), hides from me an aspect of things which it would be in the interests of my philosophy to consider. What you say about Mozart touches me, for I am very sensitive (though you might not think it) to music. Lucretius, to whom I am accustomed to look for wisdom, omits, I think, to mention the music of the spheres, and that is my sole ground for suspecting him of incompleteness.

You are an honest mole, said the lark, as well as a music-loving one ; and now, to reward you for your artistic conscience, I will tell you a great secret. Oh, it is hidden from moles, unless they be music-loving ones! *The world is not really dark at all, but full to overflowing of light.* And

that is why I sing, and why my songs are worthy of Mozart.

Every living creature is full of light, and even the rocks and little stones are inwardly luminous, though they are not so intelligent. And this is why the brooks murmur, and the waves laugh, and the trees sigh in the wind, and the birds in them sing their songs, sometimes lovelier than mine. There is a bird who sings now and then when I am about to go to rest, and whom I should envy, if I could find it in my heart to envy any one—oh, how I wish you could hear him! But this talk of music must be wearisome to one without a technical interest.

The language of birds is not talk, said the mole gallantly, and I wish you could go on for ever. I see now that soaring aloft reveals points of view that are concealed from a mere drudge like myself, and I begin to wish I had wings like you.

Keep on with your love of music, sang the lark merrily, and perhaps you will have.

The Stoic and the Christian Martyr

The Stoic and the Christian Martyr

A Stoic sat beside an early Christian who had been his friend, and who, his trial ended, had been allowed a brief airing.

My dear friend, said he, I hear that you have been condemned to be burnt at the stake ; and I find it hard to express my horror, and the deep compassion which your position inspires in me. We have often discussed philosophy together : how comes it that you have accepted this ruinous superstition, and are prepared to maintain it at the cost of your life ?

We reached no end in our discussions, answered the other, and I felt a need in me that no earthly philosophy could fill. Truth, to be really truth, must satisfy the heart's desire. You were always gentle

and candid in our talks, but I felt that you were not seeking the same things as I. Truth, to the two of us, meant something different. There are these two types of mind, the tender and (if I may say it without offence) the tough.

Is there not a slight mixing of things, observed the Stoic, in this division — a confusion of thoughts, with their proper goal, and feelings, with their demands? I should say that the true antithesis was rather between the hard-headed and the soft-hearted. I am as tender as you, or try to be, where tenderness is in place; but the sincere pursuit of truth seems to me to demand a different quality. I should say that, here, single-mindedness, and something like the absolute innocence of the child, was the only virtue.

I have often admired, returned the Christian, your genuine love of truth, but there seems to go with it that hardness—as you yourself acknowledge—and I sometimes find it deeply wounding.

It is the hardness of the surgeon's knife,

replied the Stoic, that penetrates in order to bring peace and comfort to a distracted soul. To *such* hardness the soul should be insensible.

But can the end be reached ? objected the Christian—can relief and healing be really brought ?

That is a matter of faith, said the Stoic.

This intellectual faith, I fear, returned his friend, is lacking to me. For knowledge of the truth I must lean on another. That is *my* faith. But in docility I see that we are alike.

After a few moments of meditation, the Stoic turned to the Christian and said : But how can you feel sure of attaining the truth by this path—are you not sometimes troubled by doubts ?

To confess the truth, answered the Christian, I am. I alternate between two states, in one of which I experience conviction and a mystic sense of joy, and in the other the disquieting suspicion that the world may not be, after all, as I dream it.

And how do you deal with this latter state? asked the Stoic.

Here it is, replied the Christian, that I make use of the reasonings in which our discussions have trained me. I say to myself that it *may* be so; that life would be a sorry farce if it were *not* so; and then —under the strong impulse of that desire of the heart of which I have spoken— I act as if it were so. In short, I have a will to believe; and I maintain that, hedged in by the limitations I have suggested, I have a right to believe.

I like better your expression, said the Stoic, of acting as if it were so; for one cannot make oneself believe by willing it —though one may find within one a will to believe that one has not made—and I admit that, in the conditions you mention, you have the right so to act. But everything depends on one's estimate of the objective state of things; and, still more, on their being as one conceives them.

Yes, said the Christian: things are as they are, and the consequences of them

will be what they will be, and there is no profit in being deceived.

What risks, then, returned the Stoic, do you run !

Yes, said the Christian, but for the hope of what a glorious reward ! I cannot make terms with your view that this is the only world, and my hopes are fixed on another.

You have sufficient ground, continued the Stoic, after a little, for dissatisfaction with the present life. But have you considered what may happen to the world if you altogether withdraw your interest from it ? You could do so much, with your moral energy and your brotherly love, to redeem and reconstruct it, if your thoughts were not fastened on a better one. Think what may happen, if your nascent religion should become a power in the world : the hardening, and deflection from their proper end, that always come when ideas pass over into institutions ; the earthly ambitions, the thirst for temporal pomp and grandeur, that arise in their

ministers ; the subtle adjustment of unworldly ideals to worldly ends, the persecutions of those of another way of thinking —nay, the wars, and the corruptions without end, that are only too likely to follow.

You draw a dreadful picture, replied the Christian ; but it is only a possibility, and things may turn out differently. We must leave the future to God.

There is a sense, said the Stoic, in which I agree with you.

At this moment the Stoic and the Christian, who had been sitting on the sea-shore, were swept away by a great wave, and found themselves, *ex improviso*, on the edge of eternity. We must swim for our lives, cried the Christian. Heaven helps those who help themselves.

I fear it helps no one else, replied the Stoic. That is probably what your prophet meant when he said that the kingdom of heaven is within you.

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